responsibility for maintaining the standards in higher education, necessary regulations, directions and circulars, etc., in this regard are issued by the Central Government /UGC from time to time.

A major thrust is being given to improve the quality of education and research in the institutions of higher learning. The number of Universities and colleges/institutions which have been accredited by National Assessment and Acreditation Council is 94 and 429 respectively. UGC has identified five Universities as the "Universities with potential for excellence". Tweleve Universities have been identified under the scheme of "Centres for Excellence". The Commission has decided to launch a scheme to identify 100 colleges throughout the country as "Colleges with potential for excellence". Model curricula in core subjects have been circulated to all the Universities in the country with an advice to update their Curricula in a time bound manner. The premier research institutions like ICSSR are providing fellowships and other support to research in social sciences.

Recent initiatives taken to strengthen the technical education system include decision to introduce Credit-based system in the technical education, conversion of Regional Engineering Colleges (RECs) into the National Institutes of Technology (NITs), introduction of All India Enginerring Entrance Examination (AIEEE), launching of a fully dedicated technical education channel, launching of a special programme to improve quality of technical education, participation of private initiatives, development of technologies in emerging areas and their transfer to user agencies through technology development missions, transfer of techno-economic advances in technical education and apropriate technologies to rural people through expansion of Community Polytechnics and improving the productivity of the informal sector of the economy.

Change in present Education system

†2156. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that present education system has failed to develop prudent citizens;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, whether Government have formulated any effective policy to bring a concrete and comprehensive change in the quality and standard of present education system; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. VALLABHBHAI RAMJIBHAI KATHIRIA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c)The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 as modified in 1992, evolved on a national consensus, has laid down a comprehensive framework that guides the development of education in its entirety. It continues to be relevant and has stood the test of time. It stresses the need for improvement of the standard of education at all levels.The Policy envisages the need for re-organisation of the education system especially, technical and management education system with reference to the changes in economy, social environment, production and management processes, the rapid expansion of knowledge and the great advances in science and technology. As educational development is a continuous process, constant efforts have been made from time to time in consultation with State Governments and other stakeholders and appropriate changes have been brought about in the implementational aspects of the policy.

Hearing-Speech impaired children

2157. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of hearing-speech impaired children in the country;

(b) whether Government have formulated certain schemes for providing education to these children;

(c) if so, the details of the schemes;

(d) what steps Government have taken to integrate hearing impaired children in mainstream schools; and

(e) whether Government plan to instruct public/private schools also to accept children with learning difficulties and develop suitable infrastructure to provide quality education to these children?